

Time-Out Guidelines



Helping your toddler to understand **acceptable behavior** is a challenge not only for your son or daughter, but for you as well.

Using time-out – temporarily removing a child from where misbehavior has occurred to an unrewarding space – is a popular disciplinary tool. But some experts say the practice should never be done in anger or viewed as punishment.

Instead, it is an opportunity to **stop the misbehavior while your child takes time to calm down** and regain control of his or her emotions. Time-outs also **enable parents to lower stress** and regroup as well.

The practice is most effective to start when your child is at least 18 months old.

Advice for an effective time-out:

- ▶▶ Remove your child from where he or she is misbehaving to the same quiet spot, if possible.
- ▶▶ Explain in simple words what negative behavior is being corrected. For example, “No throwing.”
- ▶▶ Use your child’s age to determine duration – one minute per year is sufficient.
- ▶▶ Return your child to time-out if he or she gets up. Make it clear you are in control.
- ▶▶ Keep time-out unrewarding. There should be no conversation, television or books involved.

Steps to take after a time-out:

- ▶▶ Hug your child and remind him or her why the misbehavior should not be repeated.
- ▶▶ Reinforce the reason for time-out. Ask your child to show you how to behave correctly.
- ▶▶ Ask your child to talk about the possible consequences of his or her negative actions (depending on age).
- ▶▶ Clear the air. After your child has stopped the unacceptable behavior, tell him or her that you expect good conduct. Move on or consider a new activity.

**Use a time-out to shape rather than punish behavior.
Remember, discipline is about teaching.**



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1-800-552-7096 Virginia Child Abuse Hotline (language line available)

800-Children (800-244-5373) Parent Helpline